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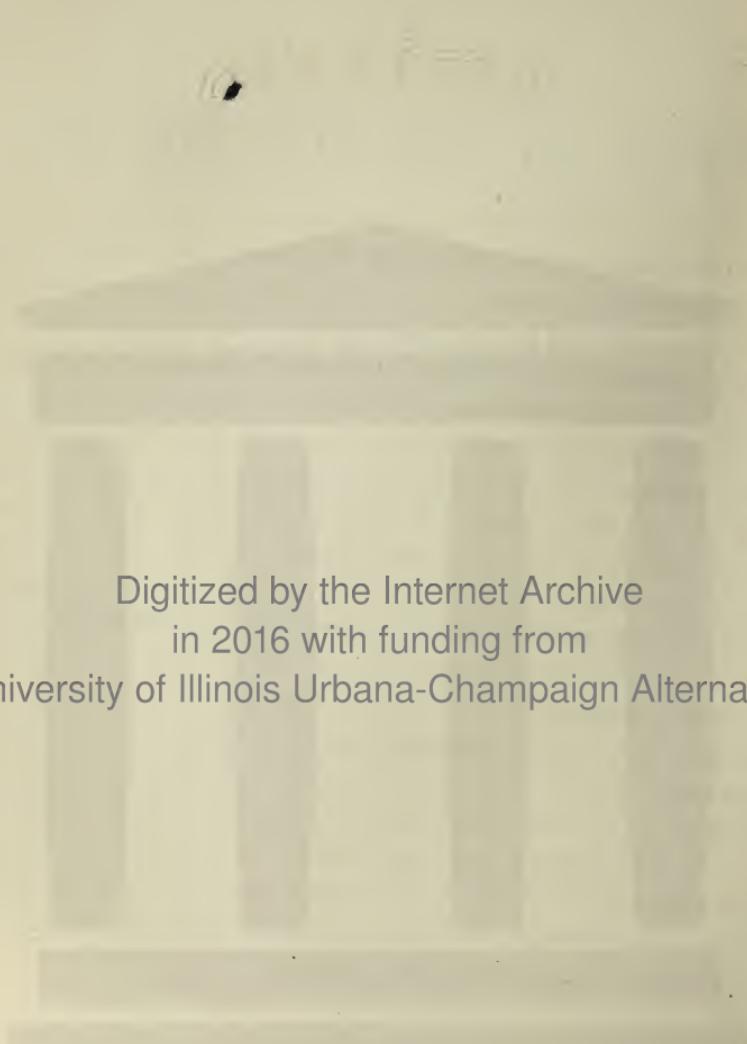
Value of the Study of Church History
in Ministerial Education. A Lecture
delivered to the Senior Class
of Andover Theological Seminary,
By Egbert C. Smyth. 1874.

VALUE
OF THE
STUDY OF CHURCH HISTORY
IN
MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

A L E C T U R E
DELIVERED TO THE
SENIOR CLASS OF ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
BY
EGGBERT C. SMYTH.

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LECTURE.

I am to speak to you of the *Value of the Study of Ecclesiastical History to the Christian Minister*. This topic naturally arises for discussion in the Introductory Lectures which are now delivered in the Junior Year. It will be considered, on this occasion, in its immediate and practical, rather than in its scientific, relations.

Such a method has this infelicity. It puts the speaker in the position of a pleader for his department of instruction. Let me say then frankly, at the start:—I would prize more, as an argument for the study of History, the results in your own experience of six months actual work than any considerations I can possibly offer. History is a general word, which covers all the thought and life of the Church of Christ for eighteen centuries. To plead for its study seems to me like urging you to be scholars, or to be wise, or to exercise common sense. And then, so great a theme has so many relations and uses that, were I to mention all that occur to me, I might easily omit the special advantages you would discover for yourselves by the study, and the ones that would most incite you to its prosecution. If, however, by my not happening to allude to these benefits, you were to conclude that you can wisely rank historical studies with those which are of no immediate and urgent importance, and if thus you should fail of discovering for yourselves their value, this Address would do you more harm than good.

Let me not, then, be supposed by any one to be resting my cause on this Lecture. So far as it is a plea, let its general argument be this:—If History can do for a man what is now to be indicated, it can do a great deal more which is not even hinted at.

The study of Ecclesiastical History, I premise, has been at a certain disadvantage from several causes.

As an independent and co-ordinate element of ministerial training it is of comparatively recent origin. I refer, in this remark, to our own methods and practices, not to those of the Church at large. At the beginning of this century the chief theological discipline of New England clergymen was gained by the study of Dogmatic Divinity. The founders of Andover Seminary aimed at a much more liberal and systematic culture. The Constitution which they adopted contains a scheme of ministerial training very remarkable for its scope and intent. Pupils are required to reside at the Seminary three full years, vacations excepted ; “a period,” it is significantly added, “scarcely sufficient for acquiring that fund of knowledge which is necessary for a minister of the Gospel.” Important topics of public instruction are specified which have not yet found a place in our curriculum, and which are not likely to, without an extension of the time of study. In this broad and generous plan the department of Ecclesiastical History finds fitting recognition. But its definite establishment came slowly and in a limited way. Its history is a reflection and illustration of the estimate which has generally been put upon the value of historical studies in the education of Christian ministers. At the start (1808), the Seminary was provided with instruction in Dogmatic Theology and Sacred Literature. The following year (1809), a Professor of Sacred Rhetoric was appointed. Ten years later, an “additional Professor” of Rhetoric was chosen ; owing, I suppose, to the feeble health of the Bartlet Professor, Rev. Dr. Porter. In 1821, an assistant teacher was chosen in Biblical studies, and this was followed by other elections, and by the appointment of a Professor of Hebrew. The “primary duties” of the new Professor of Rhetoric were defined to be in this department. He was, however, to give instruction in Ecclesiastical History “so far as leisure and opportunity might permit.” Not until 1824, was there a Professorship of History. It did not then stand alone, but

was connected with Pastoral Theology, and the criticism of sermons. The earlier elections to the Brown Professorship of History, I am informed, had special reference to the qualifications of the candidates to give instruction in Pastoral Theology. Down to 1853, this study divided the Summer Term of the Senior Year with Homiletics. The proportion of time allotted to the several departments, omitting voluntary exercises, was, for the entire course, as follows: one third to Sacred Literature, one third to Dogmatic Theology, one sixth to Sacred Rhetoric, one ninth to Church History, one eighteenth to Pastoral Theology. As respects History, the actual distribution, with the majority of students, is believed to have fallen short of the proportion which has been stated. During Rev. Dr. Shedd's connection with the Seminary, historical studies were carried into the last term of the course. In 1868, Pastoral Theology was transferred to Rev. Dr. Taylor, Smith Professor of Theology and Homiletics in the Special Course. In 1871 — in view of a recommendation from the Faculty of the Seminary, that a larger share of time be granted to the Historical Department "because of the great changes in its relation to Theological training which have taken place in the last twenty years" — the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to extend the study of History to the two preceding years. In some other Seminaries a similar advance was made earlier. Yet the correctness of the impression made by the foregoing statements respecting the position of History in the training of New England ministers, will not, I think, be questioned. Relatively to other departments it has had an inferior place and influence. Here and there, by virtue of a natural taste for the study, or some special advantages of culture, or other reasons extrinsic to the Seminary influence, historical studies have received an exceptional attention. But, in general, the pastors of New England have not been at home in the History of the Church, as they have been in either the Bible or the New England Theology; nor could this be expected. I am not surprised, therefore, when one student and another, coming back from an excursion for

a Sabbath's preaching, reports that he finds Christian ministers who make, as he judges, very little use of History in their labors. Nor is it strange that for him the inference, like sin, lies at the door,—if these most valued and successful pastors get on so well without this most toilsome study, so can I. Any one who observes what excellent and noble work they have done might be tempted to argue that an instrument of which they make so little use cannot be very important.

Closely connected with the fact to which I have just alluded, and in part explaining it, is another, which likewise operates to the disadvantage of historical study. I refer to *the deficiency of convenient, and even necessary, aids for its prosecution.* Our libraries have been lamentably deficient in the works necessary for independent investigation. Having occasion, a few years since, to trace through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the history of opinion respecting a question which has been specially prominent in our doctrinal controversies, I prepared a list of the leading theological writers during the time mentioned, and took it to our Library. The authors in question, were systematic theologians,—each best known by his Loci, or Systema, or Compendium, or Corpus, or Panstratia, or Cursus, or Medulla, or Medulla Medullae, or something of the kind. I found many a commentary from these divines on our shelves, but their dogmatic works were few and far between. Our accomplished and indefatigable Librarian could tell you, if he were ever disposed to speak of his own labors, what effort has been expended to fill up such *lacunae*.

Beside this difficulty arising from the deficiencies of our public collections, has been the lack of reasonably cheap and convenient editions and translations of the more important writings of the fathers and doctors of the church, of historical theological encyclopaedias, of thorough monographs, and even, until lately, of general histories of Christian doctrine and life which would at once stimulate and reward earnest study. How few private libraries have contained any tolerable apparatus for patristic studies. The requisite

aids have been out of reach. A vast amount of work, in addition to that already expended during the last twenty-five years, needs still to be done to lighten these disabilities. And, in addition to the literary labor which is required, parishes need to be awakened to the importance of providing Pastors' Libraries. Not long since a recent graduate of this Seminary called here, on his way to Boston, with a comfortable sum of money in his wallet, bequeathed to the parish over which he was settled for the purpose I have just named; and there was, he said, a fund besides to yield an annual income. Would that such gifts were more frequent! Whatever may be thought of parish funds to pay the salaries of ministers, there can be no objection to aid of this sort. And it is sorely needed.

I will allude to but one other reason why historical studies have not been more generally appreciated and helpful — *our past isolation and the habits this has engendered*. A missionary who goes to Armenia, or Syria, or Greece, or Egypt, or Austria, soon finds that he must study Church History. He is everywhere confronted by organizations which preserve the forms and traditions of mediaeval, or of a still more ancient Christianity. The past is before him. How different it has been here. Not needing History for controversial or aggressive purposes, we have easily lost sight of other ends. And then, having put the Atlantic Ocean between us and so many abuses of authority, we have felt a little shy of anything that might convince us of its uses. We have felt that the future, rather than the past, was ours, and that life here was beginning anew. It has been almost as easy to undervalue History as it has been difficult to acquire it.

These causes are rapidly passing away. About the middle of this century, a new and powerful impulse was given to the study of Church History in our theological schools. Three men deserve special mention for their part in this movement: — Dr. Henry B. Smith, a pupil of Neander, and an inheritor of his catholic spirit, who was placed in the chair of Eccle-

siastical History in Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1850 ; Dr. Shedd, who began here, in 1853, the delivery of Lectures on the Philosophy of History and the History of Doctrines, which were received with enthusiasm, and have since been published ; and Dr. Schaff, who had sat under the instructions of the leaders of the great historical schools of Germany—Baur, Neander, and Dorner—and commenced, in 1853, the publication, in its English form, of his own attractive and valuable History of the Apostolic and Ancient Church. Others—as Professor Torrey, by his translation of Neander's General History of the Christian Religion and Church, Dr. Joseph Addison Alexander at Princeton, and more recently Dr. Fisher at New Haven—have contributed influentially to the same movement. The result is, that in all our Theological Seminaries there has been awakened an interest in historical studies which is full of promise. Our Libraries, also, are rapidly improving. The antiquarian bookstores of the Old World are frequented by no more curious and eager purchasers than those who come from “America”—as Europeans call our country. Incentives and helps to these studies are rapidly multiplying in other ways. Within seven years, nearly all the extant works of the Fathers down to the Council of Nicaea, together with several volumes of Augustine's writings, have been published in English translations. Our Methodist brethren, greatly to their credit, are supplying us with a Theological Cyclopaedia in which Church History and Religious Biography occupy a prominent place. The best work of foreign scholars in these departments is enriching, in multiplied ways, our own literature. We are coming, also, into much freer and more intimate relations to the older Christian communions, and to the institutions and customs of the lands where they have flourished. We are discovering that democracy and the nineteenth century alone cannot save the republic which is so dear to us. There is an increasing disposition to take counsel of experience, to learn of the past. Culture is more widely diffused, is becoming more comprehensive in its plans

and aims, and is more highly prized. Some men every year find out that there are new sources of inspiration and power in the rich appropriations of Christ's teachings which pious souls and powerful churches have made in the past; and such ministers will soon shame, if they do not stimulate, their less enterprising brethren. I would not stand sponsor for the position and influence of a clergyman, in an educated community, twenty years from now, who has acted on the principle that, because his father was an efficient preacher and pastor without History, he can neglect it. His father was the peer of his brethren in the ministry, and a leader of his flock. He will be, at best, a degenerate vine without much root—a sort of black sheep, and with not much of a fleece at that.

I speak thus confidently, because I see clearly that the causes which have hitherto made History of so little account in the studies and aids of a Christian minister are fast passing away. History now *can* be studied on a broad scale, and *can* be more liberally and effectively used. In such a state of the case, the masculine, the energetic, the more thoughtful minds will avail themselves of its treasures, and the rest will go where weaklings must. I say these things, also, because of my conviction of the Worth of History when studied and used.

This I wish now to impress.

I. The study of Ecclesiastical History is an indispensable aid in the mastery of Christian Doctrine.

In all our Seminaries there are chairs of Dogmatic and Polemic Theology. These have usually been filled by men of superior ability. Theology is inculcated in its most attractive and effective forms. The student looks for, and receives, the last statements which the science has reached—so far, at least, as the ability of the lecturer is equal to his task. It is a very natural impression, therefore, that one's note-book contains, in a condensed and useful shape, the conclusions of the best wisdom of the Church, the ripened

fruit of all past theologic thinking. To this conclusion I raise no objection, but only to one to which it is a stepping-stone. The study of Theology, it is sometimes inferred, may, for practical purposes, at least, be reduced to the mastery of the latest system. When Eschatology, accordingly, is completed in the dogmatic course some students appear to feel that they have reached the last things of Christian Theology. Here is the high-water mark. What use is it to wade in the shallows of the Apostolic Fathers; or stick and broil on the flats of monkish stupidity; or be whirled about, if not engulfed, in the circlings and subtleties of Mediaeval scholasticism; or why take Luther, or Calvin, or Edwards, for a pilot, when it is evident that they all made great mistakes? Theological navigation is now a much more perfect science than in their time; we have our improved charts and compasses, and chronometers regulated by the last observations, and all our sailing directions in our note-books, as exact and perfect as a table of logarithms, and — “so convenient”! Well, it’s something to see a tide come in, if we do know beforehand how far it is coming. It is something to learn how to make a chart, as well as how to use a perfect one. It is much to know a science in its principles, in its sources, in its various methods, as well as in its formulas and rules. It is more to gain, as a personal possession and power, a love of investigation, a habit of testing affirmed results, the genuine philosophic spirit which seeks to know not only that a thing is, but how it became so.

There are two ways, it has been said, of studying a science. One method is, to study it in its abstract propositions, or its final statements. The other is, to study it in its growth. Both methods are necessary. For our present purpose it is needful only to show the necessity of the historical method.

It lies in this fact: *The last statements of Christian science are the result of a historical process, apart from which they cannot be thoroughly understood.*

Even the most common words we use are better understood by us if we know their derivation and history. We

need to know this if we are to know them thoroughly. There is always a tendency in language, as it becomes old, to lose its specificness and individuality. Niebuhr, in his last sickness, amused himself with putting into a few exact sentences the thoughts which Cooper has spread over pages. Much of the matter which daily issues from the press might be translated into different words, and the meaning lose nothing by the change either in clearness or fulness. We have, in reading, the Irishman's feeling, that "one word is as good as another, and indeed a good deal better." In order to appreciate the precise meaning of a word we need to learn its origin and history. It is so with religious, with theological words, no less surely than with all others. And when these have become the formulas of theological science, the signs and monuments of its progress, the crystallization of centuries of agitation, much more do they need to be interpreted in connection with the whole preceding movement. Take the words Nature, Person, Covenant, Imputation, Atonement. Each has a history. Each, to be appreciated, needs to be looked at in the light of its history. The fulness of meaning in such terms, their various relations, cannot be comprehended without an acquaintance with their origin and growth.

The argument increases in force as we pass from single words to literature, from language to the productions of poetic genius or philosophic insight and reflection.

No one among us would think now of studying any celebrated work in English Literature apart from its historical connections. No poets have been more truly original and independent than Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth. Yet Chaucer must be studied in connection with the Italian, as well as the Saxon and English poets who preceded him. Spenser delights to confess Chaucer to be his master. Shakespeare is not ashamed to say how dear he was to him. Milton lays a leaf upon the graves of each of those who had gone before him, and dares be known to think sage Spenser a better teacher than Scotus or

Aquinas. Chaucer and the Ballads gave direction to the genius of Cowper, and the poetry of Rydal Mount and the Lakes took its rise from the publication of Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry. What work seemingly stands alone and apart, like the Paradise Lost of Milton? Wordsworth's line respecting its author,

“Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart,”

expresses the common feeling. Yet that work is not the product of one age or one mind alone, though it has the stamp of both. It lays under contribution the collected wisdom of centuries of thought and toil, “the seasoned life of man” in all ages “preserved and stored up in books.” “The old and elegant humanity of Greece,” the imperial majesty of Rome, the wisdom and fervor of Hebrew prophets, the “barbaric pride of Hunnish and Norwegian stateliness,” the chivalric splendor and magnificence of the Norman,—all mingle and flow in a deep, continuous stream. He who would enter into its composition needs the broadest historical culture.

The same requisite obtains no less in respect to any great theological system. Every such system appropriates the results of preceding movements. It draws from accumulated stores of exegesis. It uses some philosophical method, much of which has been previously elaborated. It has a historical genesis. Something in the times in which the author lives—something which has a history—calls it into being. We may take any system, at any point of the history—we may take Augustine's statements, or Calvin's, or Edwards's, or Emmons's, or Dr. Taylor's,—no matter how independent the maker, or how self-consistent, determinate, and explained the system, it *has received* far more than it has originated; its historical materials are its largest part; and what is peculiar in it is so relatively, and to be appreciated needs to be compared with that from which it differs. Augustine's theological influence has rarely, if ever, been equalled. His mind was pre-eminently original and constructive. Yet no one can rightly estimate his system, without taking into

account his personal history, the scepticism through which he fought his way, his Platonism, the preaching of Ambrose, the traditions of the Church, the errors of Manichaeism out of which he emerged as the sun from clouds, and those of Pelagianism, which he fought with an invincible ardor and prowess. He was a teacher of Literature before he was a bishop. Both the old Empire and the new Society ministered to his Christian science. He knew Paganism so well that he could deal it a death-blow; the Catholic Church so well that he could become its foremost champion. His *De Civitate Dei*, which describes the origin, progress, and destiny of the two Cities built by the love of self and the love of God, is a noble Apology for Christianity on the basis of a comprehensive Philosophy of History. Or take the father of scholastic theology, the saintly Anselm. No one could be selected from the middle period of the history of the church whose theological influence has been greater. He stands at the head of a powerful movement, yet not as disconnected with the past. He feels constantly the influence of Augustine. He elaborates the same doctrine of faith in the spirit of that teacher. He is a master of what was known of the logic of Aristotle. He is able to reproduce and reconstruct, because he has appropriated and thoroughly assimilated the materials previously gathered. He is the theologian of his age, in part because he knows what preceding ages have accomplished. His *Monologium*, in which he discusses the doctrine concerning God, and his *Cur Deus Homo*, in which he discusses the Incarnation, use or review the proofs or theories before advanced. Anselm as a young man quietly, diligently, perseveringly, working in the library of the monastery of Bec in Normandy, is the necessary precursor of Anselm the theologian.

Or, take the writings of Calvin or Edwards, or any divine who has contributed to the advancement of theology. Edwards, we are told, "had an uncommon thirst for knowledge, in the pursuit of which he spared no cost nor pains. He read all the books, especially books treating of theology,

that he could procure, from which he could hope to derive any assistance in the discovery of truth." He conceived of Theology as a "*History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history." Original and prolific as was his mind the substance of his teaching was Calvinism, as that of Calvin was dependent on Augustine. Especially is this historical dependence evident in the phraseology of public Confessions or Creeds which have attained to general symbolic importance. In such symbols every article is like a battle-flag, every important word is an inscription of some victory.

Now if our systematic Theology is thus largely a result of the past, if it is nourished and shaped by History, and is just what it is because of its History, it is unscientific and unwise to think we can appreciate it apart from this History. It is not an isolated thing. It is not an absolutely new revelation. It is essentially a growth, and should be studied as a growth.

I have assumed thus far that the system before us is not only the latest, but the best. We need, however, it is obvious, some criteria of this, some power as well of judging for ourselves what is best. Biblical study is our first aid and guarantee. Philosophical study, also, comes to our help. For every theological system is a product of two factors, Scripture and Philosophy. Historical discipline and knowledge are scarcely less needful. I should complicate my argument, perhaps, too much, were I to dwell on the fact that Biblical and philosophical study to aid us most must each be in part historical. Let me pursue a more direct method.

Every Christian Doctrine has a certain centre of gravitation. It has an appointed orbit, or course. It has a necessary substance — an essence. Then it has a great many other things which at times seem necessary to it, and are more or less intimately related to it or serviceable in its uses, which are, after all, not essential to it. It has a constant element, and a variable element. One of the best helps in finding out what is necessary to it and what is not, what is permanent

and what is transitory, is to trace its course through long periods of time, through revolutions in philosophy, through mutations of systems. Take the doctrine of Atonement. Various theories have sprung up about it, and have had great sway over men's minds, and then have lost their ascendancy. Our own time produces them, as have past times. You have before you some statement which claims to be peculiarly meritorious. Test it by the History of the doctrine. Probably what seems new is not so absolutely. It has had already, to a certain extent at least, a trial. But however this may be, does it or does it not take up—at any rate not exclude—what a review of the history of the doctrine shows to have been a present and shaping element all along the line of its progress? The test is indeed not final. There is no infallible bar of opinion, even of Christian opinion. But there is a presumption amounting to a moral certainty, that a statement of the doctrine which excludes what can be discovered to have been, through the past, a constant factor in it, is so far a false statement. And if we concede a possibility that it is not, it still remains true that he only can understand the true nature of his work and the force of evidence requisite to make this possibility an actuality, who has risen to an appreciation of the fact that all presumptions are against him.

It may, indeed, be said that when we attempt to find such a common consent, or such a historic centre and substance of a doctrine, we are not likely to obtain much that is specific and important. The fact of Christ's death for us, it may be admitted, has been credited, but the philosophy of it has had no fixed form. One theory has supplanted another and all have shown themselves inadequate. This concedes then, in part, what I claim. History has shown the impossibility of a perfect theory, and gives you therefore a criterion of the new philosopheme.

But I think that the *study* of History, which is what I plead for, does more. There are elements of the dogma of Atonement which no brilliant speculations have been able to outshine; which no scepticism has been able to dim; which

no changes in ritual, or polity, or method of caring for souls, have been able wholly to withdraw from Christian teaching and life. Such an element is the objective relation of Christ's death on the cross to the divine forgiveness. And Christian history stamps and seals this truth as something not likely ever to be lost, whatever forms, in the ages to come, the doctrine may assume.

What is true of the doctrine of Atonement is so of every other article of our faith. It has a history ; and this history reveals what is permanent and essential, and so far affords us aid in our judgment of present statements.

Were there time I would dwell also on the advantage in theological study of a comparison of systems. We are discovering that much may be gained for our appreciation of Christianity by regarding it both in its likeness and its unlikeness to other religions. The history of Theology is fruitful in great systems. The study of them in their antagonisms, as well as in their harmonies, serves to bring out more sharply and definitely, in our thinking, as well as more fully, the dogmatic treasures of Christianity. No one system, however complete, can teach us as much as we can learn respecting the same system by studying it comparatively. We are impressed by such study with the importance of theological perspective and proportion,— how an excess here, or a defect there, may so change, in their relations, truths held in common, as to produce immense differences in their practical use.

And then we ought always to remember that the systems of our own time are, in part, the children of their time. Theological progress betrays constantly a law of action and reaction. It is almost inevitable that our theological thinking, if nourished chiefly by the products of our day, should share in their imperfection. So far as this culture brings us into sympathy with our own age it fits us to work in it, and in this respect it is of advantage. But one-sidedness begets the same. Symmetry is the ideal to which we should aspire. We should strive to correct the mistakes of the past, and at the

same time not leave as many for those to lament who come after us. When we are tempted to think that our doctrine of ability is indispensable to the conversion of sinners, it is well to go back a century and see how in Whitefield's and Wesley's hands an older doctrine of inability was fruitful in mighty revivals. Time is ever equalizing and supplementing. And when we think that all the power of the Gospel has been put into a certain statement, it is very useful to hear the calm voice of History say to us: Your statement is only a half-truth, and the Gospel is much greater than you have imagined.

So far as History is an aid in theological study it is of service to the preacher. Its relation to the Pulpit deserves, however, to be directly treated. I remark, then, secondly:

II. The study of the History of Christianity is indispensable to the most effective presentation of its claims. History is as important to the preacher and missionary as to the theologian.

God's chosen method of addressing men is largely through History. The recorded discourses of inspired Apostles are no less historical in form than doctrinal in substance. Read Demosthenes' Orations, and see what an element of power is his use of History; how this shapes and clothes and vivifies his argument; what electric power it gave to his appeals.

The great work of the preacher is persuasion. Persuasion requires argument. History gives the most effective logic, the logic of facts. Rites, doctrines, rules of life, methods of missionary labor, these have been already, and on a large scale, tried. Truth and error have borne their fruits. These are now secure, attested, palpable facts. They can be seen, handled, and shown to men. Here is a great source of argument for the Pulpit. History never exactly repeats herself. Yet the same principles which the Christian minister now receives from Christ and His Apostles have been working in the world for eighteen centuries. By their fruits they are known and they are justified. Error, too, has run its course.

Compromising statements, partial statements, as well as false ones, have shown their defectiveness and their weakness. The illusions and delusions of an age are not wholly new in principle. A knowledge of the past not only makes the eye keen to detect them, it makes the hand strong that strikes at them. It is a growing illusion of our time that the Pulpit has nothing to do with Dogma, unless to denounce it. This assumes a very specious form at times. Good men, as well as weak men, are saying with Erasmus and Dean Colet: Keep to the Bible and the Apostles' Creed; and let divines, if they like, dispute about the rest. There was good sense in this watchword when Theology, long divorced from fresh study of the Scriptures, was a decaying scholasticism. There is reason in it always, when Theology in the preacher's head is merely a scientific system. But History tells us unmistakably that no permanent evangelizing, or even reformatory, work among the masses can be effected without the agency of strong, clear, profound dogmatic convictions and statements. History can save her votary from the folly of ignoring or depreciating Dogma. It can also help him save others from such foolishness.

Take the dogma of the Trinity. It is not formally stated in the Scriptures. It is a mystery. The more we think of it the more unsearchable it appears. Every attempt to state it and to make it an article of a Creed, has produced controversy and given offence. Let the Church then, it is urged, cease to confess it, and let the Pulpit be silent about it. If you are seeking to convert a soul you will not trouble it with questions about Hypostases. So men are reasoning.

One way to meet such a state of mind is, to show historically how the doctrine sprang by a sort of logical and historical necessity from the same source as our Apostles' Creed and our New Testament itself,—that is, from the Apostolic Preaching and the Baptismal Confession; to show, still further, the practical *religious* motive and interest which mainly determined the Ancient Church in resisting all attempts to detract from the honor due the Son as the divine

Redeemer of mankind ; how religious life, in proportion as it becomes disconnected with this doctrine, loses its inspiration and its achieving power ; and how, out of the great truth of Christ's Divinity, and his co-equality with the Father, as from a celestial fountain, have flowed streams that to-day are bringing life to the nations.

Or take another dogma. I will call it Augustinianism, or Calvinism, or any other hard name you please — except Arminianism. It is very much spoken against just now. Like the Bible itself, men seem not to be able to let it alone. Its essence is the Efficacy of preventient Grace. This is not a pulpit phrase. I use it for brevity, and mindful that I am addressing theologians. Under this, or other names — less technical but more Biblical — this doctrine has had a long history in preaching. Some chapters of this history show its abuse ; how it has been misused, and put into false relations, and variously perverted in application. Shall we, therefore, give it up ? Shall we say, It is a dogma ; let it go ; let us keep to the facts of the Apostles' Creed. If you incline to this, study it in its History. See what fruit it has borne. See what errors come in when it is lost sight of, or comes not to its rights in the thinking of an age.

A very interesting and instructive volume has recently been published on the Oxford Reformers — Colet, Erasmus, and More. They are put forward as opponents of dogma, as apostles of the method of adhering to facts, as rejecters of Scholasticism and Augustinianism. The writer's task is ably done. But one is struck with a difficulty which the author himself suggests, — “ the fact that all the chief *reactions* against Scholasticism — those of Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, the Port Royalists, the Puritans, the modern Evangelicals — were *Augustinian* reactions ” ; the further fact that the labors of these reformers have been marvellously effective, while those of Erasmus and Colet and More, in what was *peculiar* to them, have sunk into almost complete oblivion.

History affirms the necessity of dogmas. It is also a judge

of dogmas. It shows that some dogmas have in them the seeds of reform, of mighty deeds of heroism and self-denial. By such arguments let the preacher keep his hearers from ignoring or rejecting them. Let him show what *life* there is in them.

Beside the logic there is in history, there is also an effective rhetoric. History enables the preacher to put abstract truth into the forms of experience and life. The predominance of Dogmatic Theology in the past training of New England ministers made their preaching, at times, too abstract and formal ; not too doctrinal, — for what, in the last analysis is to be preached, if not doctrine, — but too much wedded to a particular mode of stating doctrine, the method of theological science. We are experiencing somewhat of a reaction from this. The growing tendency to introduce anecdotes and items of religious experience, and of much that is not religious experience, is a symptom of this. One source of relief — and, indeed, the main one — must be a fresh recurrence to the Scriptures. Truth must be presented in Biblical forms, as these obtain new vividness to the preacher's mind by his own personal contact with them and the best helps of modern culture. Of these new aids the historical study of the Scriptures is specially serviceable. But, in addition, the preacher should make large use of the Bible as it has been translating through the centuries into human lives. It would commonly be a much safer way of illustrating the realities of the kingdom of heaven to draw from the sifted facts and the completed experiences History records than from the too often merely sensational stories of the newspaper. The relations of Christianity to the institutions and morals of nations — its influence upon the family, upon education, upon polities — in successive and lengthened periods furnish inexhaustible themes of reflection and instruction, and take the mind out of the realm of the abstract into that of concrete and actual life. And then there is the long history of Christian experience and life recorded in confessions and martyrdoms, in inspiring and heroic achievements, in hymns

and missals and breviaries and Imitations of Christ, and in volume upon volume of letters and dialogues and soliloquies and itineraries, in which we see how men of like passions with ourselves and those whom as pastors we would guide to heaven, overcame the world, and won their crowns. And all this wealth of experience is transmitted to us for our use, that every truth of Scripture, as we preach it, may be seen already to have had its incarnation and demonstration.

This history of Christian life is, indeed, too much as yet an unwritten one. Our Church Histories, until Neander's, told us much more of the extension of Christianity and of the rites of the Church and of its science, than of its inward life. There is here a noble field for fresh culture. Yet the storehouses which are accessible are by no means empty. Neander's Memorials of Christian Life and his General History, Dean Milman's Latin Christianity, Mr. Lecky's History of European Morals, Montalembert's Monks of the West and Ullmann's Reformers before the Reformation, D'Aubigne's Reformation, Dr. Stoughton's Ecclesiastical History of England, Dr. Palfrey's History of New England, Rev. G. F. Maclear's History of Christian Missions during the Middle Ages and Dr. Anderson's volumes on the Missions of the American Board, Dr. Stevens's History of Methodism — these familiar works, and others which will readily occur to you, suggest the copiousness of the literature. What impressive illustrations of Christian piety, and of the influence of the Gospel on individual character and social institutions, are here at hand. A diligent student may now gather treasures in this field that will enrich and invigorate his entire ministry. Indeed, to appropriate a thought from Dean Stanley, almost any text you are likely to preach from has already received its commentary in some Christian society or life. "Look," he says, "through any famous passage of the Old, or yet more of the New, Testament. There is hardly one that has not borne fruit in the conversion of some great saint, or in the turn it has given to some great event. At a single precept of the Gospels Antony went his way and sold

all that he had ; at a single warning of the Epistles Augustine's hard heart was melted beneath the fig-tree at Milan ; a single chapter of Isaiah made a penitent believer of the profligate Rochester. A word to St. Peter has become the stronghold of the Papacy ; a word from St. Paul has become the stronghold of Luther. The Psalter alone, by its manifold applications and uses in after times, is a vast palimpsest, written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated, by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and of nations ; battles, wanderings, dangers, escapes, death-beds, obsequies of many ages and countries rise, or may rise, to our view as we read it."

Such a use by a preacher of the treasures of History will lend constant freshness to his sermonizing. Freshness is the capital of a preacher at the beginning of his ministry. It is the secret of the relish the churches have for young men. The problem for you is how to keep this capital unwasted. One needs to draw from full, deep fountains. The wells of History are such. Sometimes it is thought that the early advantage which won so easily a call can be maintained by a change of parish. But if a man has not grown in his first settlement, and kept his freshness by the power of his inward life, the second call comes much more slowly and faintly and doubtfully than the first. There is a presumption against a man that wants to try a new place. He finds that his old sermons do not "take" so well, now that the white hairs begin to show themselves, as when the freshness of his thought and his countenance together had an unspeakable charm for the sympathetic.

A minister of the Gospel is looked up to as a guide of public opinion on questions of religious truth, of morals, and of Christian enterprise. He has the position and responsibilities of a leader. With ardor and enthusiasm and an open eye for new opportunities of usefulness and improved methods of teaching and working, how much wisdom he needs to bring his work into living connection with what is true and right and helpful in existing beliefs and methods.

If a gardener or mechanic wishes to continue a line he steps back until he can obtain two fixed points, and then he can settle a third in advance. There is a line of progress in Christian theology and for the church. There is a normal advance in the statement of doctrines. There is a main current, having a predetermined course, in the development of the life of the church. It is by going back on the line of progress that a point in advance is to be secured. It is by ascertaining the main drift of past thought and living that we best understand the setting of present currents, and learn in which direction the stream must flow in time to come. This is commonly one mark of the difference between a real improvement in theological statement and the beginning of heresy. The one is a more determinate and explicit enunciation of what had all along been implied in the faith of the church. The other is an error, a wandering away, a departure into some side path. One of the most eminent and successful inventors of this most inventive age once remarked, that his inventions had always been the fruit of this method. He first clearly defined to his mind what was the need to be supplied, and then considered how it was to be supplied. It is in the same way that Christian knowledge and piety are promoted ; by carefully learning what deficiencies exist in present modes of apprehending God's word, or of defending it against assault, or of enforcing its claims. We learn this largely through History. For History reveals the great necessities of man ; tests the measures that have been proposed ; and puts us upon the only successful way of suggesting more appropriate treatment. A pastor does not know how to deal wisely even with an individual member of his parish until he learns something of his history.

And this brings me to my closing remark :

III. *The study of the History of the Church is fitted to develop in the ministry personal qualities indispensable to its highest influence.*

In a discourse pronounced upon the occasion of his inau-

guration as Professor of Ecclesiastical History in this Seminary, Dr. Shedd eloquently eulogized the influence of the historic spirit in imparting to the mind qualities which are apt to be dissevered, but which are necessary complements one to the other; such as reverence and vigilance, moderation and enthusiasm, catholicity and decision of opinion.¹ One may sum the result up in Symmetry of character.

Without venturing into territory which has been thus possessed by a sort of right of eminent domain, I will notice a few individual effects upon ministerial character which the study of the History of the Church is adapted to produce. One of these results is *Breadth*.

Experience shows that the influence of an exclusive or predominant dogmatic training is unfriendly to catholicity. Certain qualities it produces which are of fundamental importance, such as clearness, positiveness, firmness, intensity of mental conviction. But unbalanced, it yields, also, dogmatism — a forgetfulness of how much of a system so high and deep and broad as Christianity cannot be taken up into the definitions and propositions of science. Christianity is greater than any or all of our systems. It is the wisdom and power of God. It has an inexhaustible fulness of truth and motive power. It is a system, and is to be systematically studied. The holiest mysteries of faith are truths of the divine reason, and may be more and more apprehended by human reason. Yet it is great, and we cannot compass it; it is high, and we cannot attain unto it. We have to confess this of the whole effort of the race. All the systems ever made do not contain it. We can only make approximations. The traveller among the Alps finds constantly about him objects of such magnitude that only after considerable experience, and the toil of ascending to the highest elevations, can he form any adequate conception of the different ranges, and their relations to each other. His eye is filled with the serrated and piercing ridge of Pilatus. He is lost in amazement beneath the beetling cliffs and soaring pinnacle of the

¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xi. p. 352 sq.

Wetterhorn. The Jungfrau lifts her snowy summit to the skies, and he seems to have seen nothing before. He identifies twenty or thirty Mont Blancs before the mountain king reveals his glittering crown. Each individual object is enough, for the time, to absorb attention. It is so in Christianity. Each separate doctrine is enough to task all our powers. So long as we are before it, it bounds the horizon. We may see all of God's government in Decrees and Predestination, and think this the highest peak. We may look at certain facts and regard them as a Covenant, and from this elevation obtain a wide survey over God's kingdom. But when the mists rise we shall see a yet nobler range, even though we are on the highest peak in a theological *Ober-Land*. And if we press on to master this, many a summit will rise upon our view; heaven and earth will often have seemed to meet, ere we see the King in His glory. Christ is above all. Our task, as Clement of Alexandria long ago said, is to throw ourselves into His greatness. And as no one man can measure from any one point of view all the Alps, so no one mind or system can give us all that may be known of Christianity.

That we may be helped, therefore, most efficiently in its study, we need profoundly, patiently, perseveringly, to observe its unfolding in the world in its diversified relations, to mark its effects on character, on society, on civilization; on morals and manners; on science and philosophy; on education and the family; on law and discipline; on commerce and the useful arts; on music and poetry and architecture, and all human and humane sentiments and powers. History is something which touches and interests us at every point, and in every susceptibility of our complex being. We exist under its law as really as under the law of gravitation. Every thought, affection, purpose of which we are conscious is influenced by what others before us have said or done. The loneliest palm of the desert springs from some seed that another palm has ripened, and only grows by moisture from the skies and nutriment from the sands. The most solitary of human

beings stands in indissoluble connection with the past. He is a member of a race. In countless ways he is linked in with the long succession. It is this great, broad, *human* interest of History which has made it a constant element of literature, of poetry and eloquence, of government and religion. "It was," says a learned and pleasing writer on the Uses of History as a Study¹, "it was an early amusement: Achilles, in Homer, is introduced singing to his harp, the glorious deeds of former heroes; and few nations are so uncultivated as not to possess some means of recording their deeds; none are so dull as to listen to these records without curiosity, without interest, without delight. The love of History is as inseparable from human nature as the love of fame. Hence the cairn, the Runic song, the knotted threads of the South American savage." Hence, too, the storied monuments of Egypt and Nineveh, sagas from the halls of Scandinavia, myths of Hellas and legends of Rome, ballads of the merry days of England's youth, epics of the olden time, and chronicles and sober histories of later date,— all alike testifying that History treats of something which comes home to men's bosoms and firesides, and enters into each one's life.

But this human interest of History culminates in religious History, as does religious in Christian History. It is as a religious being that man is distinguished from and is elevated above the rest of the creation. It is in his religious life that he rises above the conditions of infirmity and weakness, of decay and death, and takes hold on eternity, and is seen to be but little lower than the angels. Even in their most corrupted forms, his religious convictions have manifestly raised him above the brutes that perish. And in estimating the civilizations that have gained ascendency it is his idea of the divinity that has ruled him, his practical understanding of the divine government, and his sense of religious obligation, by which we finally measure and judge their worth and power.

But of all religious History the most important, the most

¹ Encycl. Metropol., ix, p. 15.

noble, the most attractive, is that which narrates the Progress of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom may be said to have existed from the beginning of human history. We may trace it back to the first promise of a Saviour. Its antagonism to the world appears in the earliest recorded events. Its conflict gives the sum and substance, the pith and marrow, of all succeeding history. And what other history has such elements of interest? Its factors are both divine and human: and these are seen to be not merely conjoined, but united—human freedom becoming real in working out the plan of Infinite wisdom in communion with its Author; human agency accomplishing a divine purpose with the certainty of destiny, yet without compulsion. We discover not merely a Divine Providence *over* men, but God himself, in Word and Prophecy, in Incarnation and by his Holy Spirit, entering into the historic course, its Source and its Goal. We see this historic course working itself out through ages of conflict and the most earnest human living, not in one department merely of human thought and action, but in all the spheres of life, so that in the mighty movement everything that has a human interest is taken up and glorified—this is the scope and the importance of the subject. There are, in universal life, no other conflicts like those of the Church; no heroes like hers; no victories, no story of human passion, of love or hate, of life or death, so full of instruction, or of so deep and tragic power. If the History of the Church is best narrated by itself, it is only, it has well been said, that we may discern thus its individual and specific character. But when this is discovered we find ourselves at a centre of light, from which we may survey the whole field of human History.

This breadth of the study—though it may dismay spirits that have lost the sense of their birthright as the heirs of eternity—is its charm and glory to those who, like Plato in the realm of mind, or Kepler among the stars, or Agassiz ranging through all the orders of animal life, aspire, on this loftier level of spiritual and Christian science, to think after Him the thoughts of God. And I know of no study so fitted to enlarge the soul.

If there were time I would like to pursue this matter into details — to suggest the value to the preacher of learning to think other men's thoughts after them, and so of gaining the power fairly to state opinions different from his own. Lawyers gain a breadth and fairness in discussion which ministers need discipline in order to secure. A protracted analytic review, as a required part of ministerial education, of the opinions which have been held respecting any Christian doctrine, is an admirable regimen for a mind that is narrow in its judgments and hasty in its conclusions. We do not, moreover, understand any man, until somewhat sympathetically we have lived through his history. We are not at our best in helping him. History trains us in going beyond ourselves and entering into other lives.

Especially is it through the right study of History that the narrow theological prejudices, the partisan strifes, the sectarian controversies, which have disfigured our religious history, are to be abated. Nothing, indeed, but the might of the Holy Spirit can remove these great evils. But among the agencies which he employs, in addition to that of the written word, no one is more powerful and hopeful than the broad and faithful study of the History of the Church — a study begun by the ministry of the land before opinions are fully formed and sides are taken, and prosecuted even amid the shock and raging of the battle. We have been said to have all the sects in this country, and all the controversies, save those which spring from the union of Church and State. Whatever may be thought as to the best theoretical adjustment of the relations of these two societies, or aspects of society, it cannot be doubted that practically, and as the world is, we have great advantages for religious unity in our freedom from the seductions and entanglements of secular policy and power, of statecraft and political chicanery, and in the facility with which those who agree in essential principles may co-operate. Therefore should we give the more earnest heed that in discussing the things of the kingdom of God we improve our more favorable opportunities by endeavoring to

promote the conciliation of theological strifes and sectarian animosities, and the coming of the day when the watchmen shall see eye to eye. As we review the past it will be our own fault if we do not gain clearer views of what is permanent in Christianity, and what is accidental and transitory ; if we do not secure a firmer tread upon soil we will not abandon but with our lives, and if we do not equally learn to be more patient with the weak in faith, and more charitable to men whose opinions differ from our own ; if we do not grow in the conviction that divine truth is attainable and of infinite worth, and no less in the conviction that our highest attainments are but partial glimpses of a glory that excelleth.

Another effect of patient and protracted study of History which I desire to notice is, *Repose of spirit*.

A leader should be calm. He should have great strength of conviction, stability of mind, a willingness to bide his time, and superiority to action in a flurry or heat. He should have the ages for his ministers and attendants. There comes into the mind that has long meditated on the ways of God with men — that has reflected on the length of time, and the shortness of a single life — a superiority to the noise and alarms and petty anxieties and vain ambitions of a less cultured soul which is something, to a Christian minister, of inestimable value. Its possession is worth many a vigil. If it were apathy or quietism, it were an injury, rather than a benefit. But it is not. It is strength to labor. It is what the minister often needs more, and finds harder to secure — strength to endure and to persevere.

History takes us from our balanceings and disquietudes, when first we discover that everything in Theology can be disputed, and is disputed, and shows us some things stable and fixed, through the centuries, as the pillars of God's throne. It carries us to other ages, when all the prospects of the Church, to human view, were darker than now, and shows how easy and how natural it had been then to be despondent, and how foolish. The empire will not see another Canossa, said Bismarck, and Europe was electrified. The

Church, we may believe, will not see another century like the tenth.

And then, what companionships History makes for us. The pastor among the hills of Vermont, or in the far West — remote from the centres of thought and life, ministering to the same people week in and week out — how shall he keep up the growth begun under the stimulus of associates and teachers and libraries? How shall his need of companionship not draw him more and more down to the level of those whose tastes and culture and range of thinking and life have been prescribed by conditions so different from his own, — how, when his primary duty is to enter into their lives, that he may be their helper? Yet if he would lift them up, he must stand above them. How shall he raise them, and rise himself? He will not do it without great effort — effort which requires constant stimulus from outside of his parish and the immediate demands of his charge. He must walk at times with *princes*. He must have companionships which will more than prove a substitute for those of the lecture-room and the debating-hall. Let Athanasius tell him what imperial qualities should be his who would train the heirs of a kingdom. Let Augustine show him how every voice of nature is a witness and symbol of One that is above nature. Let the cloud of witnessess gather about him as he speaks in faithfulness what an unbelieving generation cares not to hear. Let him have, blending ever with his own individuality, the larger consciousness of his corporate membership in the state and empire of Him who has overcome the world, and sits expecting till all His enemies are vanquished. Such a man will never rust out, nor fade out, nor be worried out. He will have something of the calmness of the eye that sees the end from the beginning.

And — one other thought — he will have *a growing sense of the exceeding greatness and glory of Christ*.

This long-drawn conflict is but a disclosure of the riches of His infinite patience and fidelity and love and power. Every martyr's death, every conquest of selfishness, every

victory of right is a witness to His sacrifice and His reign. The Christian centuries sweep by us as the train of His garment as he ascends His throne. From the morning of creation His many crowns have been gathering splendor—through all the generations, in the years of humiliation, in the hours of triumph — from each ransomed soul.

This is my crowning argument — and it needs no elaboration — the History of the Church is to him who reads aright a continued evangel of that Incarnate Word, who, in Galilee and Judaea, in the significant phrase of Luke, *began* both to do and teach, and who withdrew from earth only more efficiently to be with His Church to the end of time.

But now, of this Lecture, as Augustine says of his *Enchiridion*, there must be an end at last.

I do not ask you to do with my *reasons* for the study anything more than consider and weigh them. But as to the study itself, I would say: Pursue it, at whatever cost, and you will have more reasons for it than you will ever have time to analyze and classify and put into writing, even if you should be blessed with a lifetime longer than Methuselah's.

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